

# **MA IN HUMAN RIGHTS**

Programme Overview 2011/12

**Department of International Development  
School of Global Studies, University of Sussex**

**Convenor:**

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## **Aims and Objectives**

### **Programme Aims**

The MA in Human Rights provides students with an understanding of recent debates in the field of human rights and develops an awareness of the main critiques of the theory and practice of liberal versions of human rights. The programme examines how human rights are embedded in wider social processes of state regulation, conflict and mass displacement, transnational social movements, and the creation of global forms of governance. It aims to develop students' abilities to critically assess human rights laws, discourses and institutions and assess the relationship between local moralities, state law, state practices and international human rights law. The MA is primarily intended for students interested in researching or teaching in the field of human rights, including those wishing to pursue research careers outside the doctoral pathway. By the end of the programme students should be able to research human rights issues in a way that contextualises state and transnational legal procedures in wider social processes such as gender, class, ethnicity, and globalisation. The degree allows an opportunity to pursue a substantive specialism within the discipline and to work on a research-based dissertation.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Knowledge and understanding

Students graduating from this programme will have the following knowledge and understanding:

- An advanced knowledge and understanding of philosophical positions within the evolution and contemporary form of human rights.
- An advanced knowledge and understanding of key debates in the field (including cultural relativism, gender and rights, indigenous rights, multiculturalism).
- An in-depth knowledge and understanding of the evolution and current architecture of national, regional and global human rights regimes.
- Specialised and enhanced knowledge and understanding (through optional courses) of related fields (including migration, development studies, genocide studies, social identity, women and human rights, ethnonationalism).
- In-depth knowledge and understanding of a specific area relating to human rights through the dissertation.

### **Intellectual Skills**

Students graduating from this programme will command a number of intellectual skills. These include:

- Ability to critically engage with a range of theories and concepts associated with the study of human rights, political philosophy, identity and international institutions.
- Ability to apply these theories and concepts to particular contexts and comparatively.
- Ability to develop high-level academic arguments and express them in written and oral forms
- Ability to work together as part of a team in seminars.
- Ability to reflect self-critically upon intellectual progress
- Ability to engage in independent original research.

### **Practical Skills**

Students graduating from this programme will have developed a range of practical skills. These include:

- Skills in library research.
- Skills in analysis of various textual forms.
- Skills in synthesising material from theoretical and substantive literature.

- Skills in work organisation and monitoring of progress.
- Skills in research methods and data collection.

### **Transferable Skills**

Students graduating from this programme will have developed a range of transferable skills. These include:

- Ability to write and present work in a concise, clear and well-organised manner.
- Ability to work in teams as well as independently
- Refined ability to identify and access appropriate primary and secondary research resources.
- Ability to collate, manipulate and analyse those resources

### **Programme Structure**

In the first term, students study two core courses. Two option courses are taken in the second term. The third term and the summer are reserved for the research and writing of a dissertation on a subject chosen by the student in consultation with a dissertation supervisor. The core courses cover a number of central themes and provide a foundation for the optional courses and the dissertation. For full-time students the course is arranged as follows:

<b>AUTUMN TERM</b> (Core Courses)	<b>SPRING TERM OPTIONS</b> (Students take 2 courses)	<b>SUMMER TERM</b> (Students take 1 course + dissertation)
Human Rights and the Politics of Culture	Migration under the European Convention on Human Rights	Ethnographic Methods & Data Collection OR Methods in Development
Liberalism, Globalization and Modernity	Human Rights in International Relations	
	Women and Human Rights	
	Refugees and Development	Supervised Dissertation (10,000 words)
	Genocide in World Politics	

### **Spring Term Options outside the MA in Human Rights Programme**

In addition, students can replace one of the above Spring Term Options with any appropriate course in the University with the approval of the MA Convenor and the tutor of the course. This has allowed recent students to take:

- Idea of Race
- The Politics of Citizenship & Immigration
- International Law in World Politics
- Complex Humanitarian Emergencies
- Peace & Globalisation
- Embodiment & Institutionalisation of Violence, Conflict and Conciliation

(Note: not all options are available in any given year. This depends upon both faculty availability and student demand).

Part-time students take one course per term in each year as follows:

Year 1	Autumn Term	Liberalism, Globalization and Modernity
	Spring Term	One Spring Term Option (see above)
	Summer Term	One option + guided reading for dissertation
Year 2	Autumn Term	Human Rights and the Politics of Culture
	Spring Term	One Spring Term Option (see above)
	Summer Term	Dissertation (10,000 words)

Both core and optional (Spring Term) courses are assessed by means of a 5,000 word term paper, to be submitted in the first week of the term following the course itself. The dissertation (max 10,000 words) is written on a topic within the overall rubric of the MA programme. Each term paper is equally weighted and the dissertation is double weighted.

### **Course Descriptions**

Each course usually consists of a two-hour seminar per week during the term, for which students are required to read and prepare work in advance and at which they may be asked to give a presentation.

### **Autumn Term Core Courses**

#### *Liberalism, Modernity and Globalization*

Course tutor: Zdenek Kavan, [Z.Kavan@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:Z.Kavan@sussex.ac.uk)

This course will focus on moral philosophy and foundationalist attempts in liberal political and social theory to ground rights. It will chart the rise of modern liberalism, capitalism and individualism and notions of natural rights prevalent at the time. The course will move onto twentieth century liberalism and look at the changing role of the state and changing formulations of citizenship rights. It will move on to look at various twentieth century human rights covenants and Bills of Rights in Constitutions (e.g. Indian, South Africa, Canadian) to see how rights are instantiated in national and transnational charters and institutions. This will necessarily involve a close look at recent debates about globalization and the changing nature of national sovereignty, as well as an examination of the institutional structure of global human rights institutions such as the UN, the International Criminal Court.

#### *Human Rights and the Politics of Culture*

Course tutor: Nigel Eltringham; [n.p.eltringham@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:n.p.eltringham@sussex.ac.uk)

The course will introduce you to debates in 'the politics of difference' as they relate to human rights. We begin by examining the genealogy of the concept of culture in the twentieth-century and look at the diverse political uses to which it has been put, from being part of the discourse of the European far-right to granting greater rights for minorities that were previously politically marginalised. We consider the cultural relativist challenge to universal human rights that asserts the distinctiveness of each 'culture' and that universal human rights instruments are, therefore, inappropriate. We then assess the view that globalisation in general, and especially the globalisation of a human rights discourse, implies that relativist views of cultural distinctiveness no longer hold in an increasingly interconnected world. Subsequent weeks are concerned with specific instances of rights and difference, including minority rights; indigenous rights; women's human rights; and the question of multiculturalism.

### **Spring Term Options**

Note: not all options are available in any given year. This depends upon both faculty availability and student demand. This year we are hoping to offer the following options.

#### *Human Rights in International Relations*

Course Tutor: Zdenek Kavan; [Z.Kavan@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:Z.Kavan@sussex.ac.uk)

This course examines the process of internationalisation of human rights and the main factors that underpin that process, e.g., the nature of the international order, the relationship between human rights and sovereignty of states, and the problematic of intervention and redistribution. The use of human rights as instruments of foreign policy will be contrasted with the involvement of international non-governmental organizations. Both the global and the regional legal frameworks will be examined. Questions of cultural hegemony will be contrasted with those that claim legitimate cultural autonomy.

#### *Refugees and Development*

Course Tutor: Michael Collyer; [M.Collyer@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:M.Collyer@sussex.ac.uk)

The aim of this course is to gain knowledge and understanding of the complexity of forced migration issues in developing countries, and of the range of ideological and practical perspectives which inform policy concerning the reception and settlement of refugees, and the resolution of conflicts that give rise to forced migration flows. At the end of the course, students will be expected to have a conceptual and intellectual grasp of the principle components of the growing literature on forced migration and development, and specific understanding of the practical experience of, and lessons learnt from refugee assistance programmes over the past 50 years.

#### *Women and Human Rights*

Course Tutor: Charlotte Skeet; [C.H.Skeet@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:C.H.Skeet@sussex.ac.uk)

This course on the Human rights of Women is divided into two halves. The first half consists of core topics providing a theoretical framework for the study of women's human rights. It draws on feminist legal theory, human rights theory, anthropological and historical materials and documentation and critique of international and national rights instruments. In this half, amongst other things, we consider: different theoretical perspectives on the origins of women's rights, including critiques of westernised and linear views of rights development; feminist critiques of rights and debate over the use of rights strategies for the empowerment of women; the international implementation of women's rights, including CEDAW. The second half of the course consists of five topics. In each we will focus on the conception, implementation and breach of a specific right or rights instrument. The selection of topics will vary from year to year. The list includes, slavery and trafficking of women; Representation, violence against women, DEVAW; asylum and refuge; national and regional implementation of rights; reproductive rights; women and crimes against humanity; sexuality.

#### *Migration Under the European Convention on Human Rights*

Course Tutor: Marie-Bénédicte Dembour; [M.Dembour@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:M.Dembour@sussex.ac.uk)

The European Convention on Human Rights is not directly concerned with migration. Nonetheless hundreds if not thousands of migrants have applied to the European Commission and/or Court of Human Rights. They have made claims under virtually all articles of the Convention. They have complained, inter alia, that their deportation would expose them to torture or cut them from their family, of not having had a fair trial or having been deprived of their liberty illegally. The course explores how migrant cases have fared at Strasbourg. It asks which cases have a chance to be successful, and which have not, in respect to both legal arguments and broader social factors. It questions why racial discrimination hardly comes up in the Strasbourg case law and how post-11/9 national measures might be regarded at Strasbourg. It seeks to uncover the premises that underlie the reasoning of the Court. The overall aim of the course is thus to provide a sound legal understanding of the way the European human rights system of protection represented by the Convention works at the same time as it paints a socio-legal sketch of the Strasbourg migration record.

### Genocide in World Politics

Course Tutor: Martin Shaw; M.Shaw@sussex.ac.uk

This course deals with the problem of mass killing in world politics and the ways in which we understand and respond to it. It examines the definition of genocide in relation to war, in the international convention and from a wider sociological point of view. The first main section examines a range of historical cases of mass killing from the era of total war (Armenia, Soviet Union, Nazi Germany). The second examines recent episodes of, and issues related to, mass killing (Indonesia, Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia). The final section discusses the significance of mass killing today, including the 'Holocaust industry' and 'Holocaust denial' as well as international legal, political and military responses to contemporary genocidal episodes. The aim of the course is to stimulate understanding of the nature, contexts and implications of mass killing in world politics, as well as the common and distinctive features of the major historical instances. Dealing with necessarily difficult and contested issues, the objectives of the course are that students increase their abilities to develop and apply critical social-scientific ideas relevant to these issues.

### Dissertation

Students' choice of dissertation topic will normally arise from one of the core or optional courses. The dissertation must be based, at least partly, on either primary field or archival research, or on an original analysis of theoretical and/or methodological debates. In consultation with the programme convenor, dissertation supervisors are assigned to students at the end of the spring term. Students are entitled to four, half-hour dissertation tutorials during the Summer term. In addition, a dissertation workshop is held in week 4 of the Summer Term.

Recent Dissertation Titles include:

- Preventive Detention Law and Gross Denial of Human Rights : The Case of India
- Fulfilling the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living? Government Policy and Asylum-Seeker Welfare in the UK
- Climate Justice, Sustainability and Food: How do climate change and human rights connect in an 'age of stupid'?
- Vive la Revolution? The Impact of the Eighteenth Century Revolutions and the Thinkers on the Human Rights
- Britain's Faltering Commitment to the Prohibition of Torture
- Representation of Human Rights Violations : Its Implications for Human Rights Monitoring and Advocacy
- Denying Dignity: Asylum Seekers and the Right to Work in the UK
- Biofuels and the Land Grab : Structural Violence from Global North to South

### Teaching Faculty include:

**Marie-Benedicte Dembour**, Licence en Droit (Brussels), DPhil (Oxford).

Professor in Law. She also holds a doctorate in social anthropology. Her publications include a book entitled *Recalling the Belgian Congo: Conversations and Introspection* (2001), an edited volume *Culture and Rights* (with Richard Wilson and Jane Cowan) and a number of articles that reflect her interests in human rights, identity and migration in Europe and a monograph *Who Believes in Human Rights? Reflections on the European Convention* (Cambridge)

**Nigel Eltringham**, MA (St Andrews), MPhil (Cambridge), PhD (SOAS).

Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology. Specialist areas of research are human rights, conflict, genocide and the Great Lakes region of Africa. His doctoral research focused on how the Rwandan political class and the Rwandan diaspora accounted for the 1994 genocide. The results of this research have been published as *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (Pluto). He has, in addition, published on the dilemmas of researching genocide (in *The Ethics of Anthropology Debates and Dilemmas*, Routledge). Since 2005, he has been conducting research at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

**Zdenek Kavan**, BA (Sussex).

Lecturer in International Relations. His research interests are in Central and Eastern European Studies, questions of legitimacy and authority in international relations and human rights in international politics. Zdenek Kavan is joint editor of *Citizenship and Democratic Control in Contemporary Europe*.

**Charlotte Skeet**, BA, CPE (Sussex), LSF (College of Law).

Lecturer in Law. Research interests: Constitutions (Human Rights and Devolution); gender; education law; law and society.

**Jane Cowan**, BA (Macalester), MA (Indiana) and PhD (Indiana).

Professor of Social Anthropology. Jane Cowan's early work concentrated on issues of gender, power, identity and the body. *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece* (Princeton) focused on social dancing as a site for the construction and negotiation of social identities and relations, especially gender. She has also analysed the cultural politics of popular music, ritual production (pre-Lenten Carnival) and everyday socialising in contemporary Greece. Her fieldwork in the ethnically mixed, multilingual Macedonian region alerted her to its population's multiple and complex responses to nation-building practices. *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference* (Pluto) addressed the unresolved Macedonian controversy that re-emerged with the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the debates it triggered - political and theoretical - about nationalism, ethnicity, minority status, cultural rights and citizenship. Many of these themes were explored further in her co-edited volume *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives* (Cambridge).

### **The Justice and Violence Research Centre Seminar Series**

The *Justice and Violence Research Centre* seminar provides a focus point for students on the MA in 'Human Rights' and the 'Contemporary War and Peace Studies' and 'Anthropology of Conflict, Violence and Conciliation'. Speakers from Sussex and other universities present on current research. The seminar takes place on a Wednesday at 4pm every other week during the Autumn and Spring terms. The programme is published at the start of each term. See [www.sussex.ac.uk/justice/index.php](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/justice/index.php). Students are *strongly advised* to attend these seminars.

### **Human Rights Film Series**

There will be a series of Human Rights related documentaries on Wednesdays at 2pm in the Spring Term (immediately prior to the *Justice and Violence Research Centre* seminar).

### **Summer reading**

The following are suggested readings in preparation for the Autumn term:

Cowan, J., M. – B. Dembour and R. Wilson (eds) (2001) *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Donnelly, J. (2003) *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*. 2nd ed. (Ithaca, N.Y. ; London: Cornell University Press).

Freeman, M. (2002) *Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. (Oxford: Polity).

Goodale, M., and S. E. Merry (2007) *The Practice of Human Rights: Tracking Law Between the Global and the Local*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Wilson, R. (ed.) (1997) *Human Rights, Culture and Context, Anthropological Perspectives* (London: Pluto Press).